

## Central Region Essay Winner

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As a teenager in a digital age, where feelings are expressed in a Facebook post, 140 characters, or a photo, it's as simple as opening an app to see people's opinions and differences. I'm constantly surrounded by opinions and ideas that create a wide schism between people. I see arguments where people are judged and isolated for their differences of opinion, the origin of the catastrophe that is being treated unfairly. Seeing these actions that take us backward instead of forward on a daily basis makes me want to enact a change and purpose in my life, so that others will do likewise in theirs.

Similar to Anne Bethel Spencer, I love expressing myself through poetry. I find solace in it and have witnessed several people's lives changed simply by a three-line poem. Anne Spencer was avid about equality for all and showed it through her poems about civil rights and her indignation over the lack of rights that people had. Through her words, however, she was able to inspire remarkable people such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes.

I wish to do something similar through my writing; I want to write more about treating people fairly and embracing differences. I strive to write poems or articles, post them around my school, my city, my social media outlets, or in a newspaper to attract and inspire people to make a stitch: the first step in mending a division. In school, I'm involved with the History and Human Rights Club, a club dedicated to discussing human rights and how to make people feel welcomed. A project of ours last year, as well as this year, is that we are cutting out colorful doves and writing reassuring or inspirational messages on them to put around the school. These doves

are the constant reminder of peace that the students need to bridge the gap between differences, leading to people being treated fairly.

Last year, I saw a girl stop in the hallway, look at a dove, smile, take it off the wall, and put it carefully in her pocket. Seeing these simple crafts make someone smile and feel compassion made me happy for the rest of the day. This showed me how peace and good thoughts were contagious and that something I was involved with actually impacted someone; I will continue to write and create to provoke a new time.